

Senior Honors Recital: Music as a Door into the Emotional Mind

An Honors Creative Thesis (HONR 499)

by

Anna Stephens

Thesis Advisor

Dr. Lisa Kozenko

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

May 3, 2018

Expected Date of Graduation

May 5, 2018

Abstract

Music is a powerful way to communicate that which words cannot adequately describe. The goal of my project is to musically convey how I have developed in several aspects of my life including mentally and emotionally throughout my years here at Ball State and how music has played a role in carrying me through these developmental times. The pieces I have chosen reflect aspects of my personal experiences in musical phrases and provide an outlet to express what I have learned. I have included *Oboe Sonata in D Major Op. 166 mvmt. II.* By Camille Saint-Saëns, *Solo Pour Hautbois* by Emile Paladilhe, and *Oboe Concerto I. Rondo Pastorale* by Ralph Vaughan Williams in my program and hope that others will be inspired to find some way to assess their own views on life and their own self-expression. Music is a powerful method of communication and provides a dialogue that cannot be expressed any other way.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Lisa Kozenko for advising me through this project. I would not be where I am today without her efforts to help me become a better oboist and I am extremely grateful for her dedication to me as an oboe student throughout the years.

I would also like to thank the Ball State Honors college faculty, especially Dr. Jason Powell and Dr. Timothy Berg for challenging the way I think and encouraging me to continue growing as an individual. The content discussed in their classes was instrumental in developing my ideas for this creative project.

SpColl
Undergrad
Thesis
LD
2489
.24
2018
.574

1

Project Analysis Statement

The hardest part is always finding somewhere to begin. When I started to consider what I might do for my thesis, I was overwhelmed with the sheer terror of making a decision and having to roll with it. It started with a discussion with one of my friends. I expressed that I was struggling to figure out what I wanted to do, and our conversation turned towards evaluating things I was passionate about, one of which is playing the oboe. I thought about how involved I was in the music department and despite the fact that I had since changed majors, I was still doing it. I realized that playing the oboe was not so much something I did, but had become who I am. The instrument is an extension of myself that I use to communicate and express myself in ways words would not suffice. So I decided to do a recital. I had never given an oboe recital before, so I knew that there would be challenges. Another giant I had to muster up the courage to face was my right thumb. My dominant thumb has sustained many injuries including a double fracture my freshman year of college. This inhibited my playing for a time and still affects my endurance today. Grippled with all sorts of concerns and fears, I questioned my decision. But I couldn't tear myself away from my vision and decided to push myself; to get better every day, to get stronger, and to achieve what I never would have dreamed possible.

The experiences I've had in my honors classes here have been inspiring, provoking, and challenging. I knew that I wanted to include some insights I had about myself and philosophy in my thesis, because my philosophical brain muscles were wide awake and eager to share with the world the things I had learned. So I drew up ideas for my recital, concluding that it would be a formal showcase and reflection on my intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development through my years at Ball State. Music has been such an essential component in my life, and I have applied the things I've learned to my playing. These applications have helped me achieve levels

of playing that express more clearly what I feel when I play to an audience, and based on feedback from peers, professors and friends, successfully so. With that, as my junior year of college came to a close, I had an established notion of what my thesis would be.

In order to give a recital, I knew I must choose several pieces to prepare and find a thread connecting each of them. I had a few in mind, and had just performed one for my hearings for the music school. (This is simply a performance I give to some of the music faculty at the end of a semester to display my progress.) For my recital, I chose three pieces; *Oboe Sonata in D Major* Op. 166 mvmt. II. by Camille Saint-Saëns, *Solo Pour Hautbois* by Emile Paladilhe, and from the *Oboe Concerto* I. Rondo Pastorale by Ralph Vaughan Williams. These pieces share an overlap in their composers' lives and resonate similar themes including smooth and flowing lines as well as more turbulent and quick-paced sections. In my thought process, this clearly portrayed the highs and lows experienced in my life and the growth that resulted. I knew this preparation would take the most time of any portion of my thesis work, so I committed to learn the pieces, polish them, and keep on a schedule throughout the year.

After a time of situating, idealizing, planning, reflecting and dreaming, I drew up my thesis proposal. This was something I was anticipating anxiously, but was satisfied with the result. I had a clearer vision of what I wanted to do and how to get there. My recital would be entitled *Music as a Door into the Emotional Mind*. I was inspired because music *does* something to us, as human beings. Specifically in my life, it has been instrumental in my development and growth, especially since I've been at Ball State. This project holds a special place in my heart in its origin in musicality and that it is intertwined with something I have always loved to do.

Through my experience at Ball State, and *especially* through the Honors College, I have developed my ability to ruminate about life and think deeper into concepts I never would have

imagined. I believe self-expression is an essential part of life and must be acknowledged however any given individual chooses to express. As I have developed and nurtured my abilities in playing my instrument, the oboe, I have invested time in thinking about how music makes me feel, and also how I feel about the music I play. As said by Rebecca Stigall in her article entitled *Music as an Expression of Identity*, "Music speaks to the individual in the same way that the individual speaks through music." It's an extremely abstract concept to grasp, but nonetheless a beautiful one. My hope in completing this project is not only to express the thoughts and emotions I have when I play, but more specifically to make the audience *feel* that which I attempt to communicate about myself through this manner of expression. I want the audience to feel the things I felt and to understand the pain and to empathize with me; to journey along with me as I play to express the joys and sufferings I've experienced through the years all in those slight moments that will make up my recital. The pieces I have selected intricately relate to the events in my life over the past few years and they are why I have come so much further in my understanding of myself and of the world in which I find myself.

With these grounded truths understood, communicated, and recorded, I embarked in an intense practice period. I had been involved in taking oboe lessons once a week with my professor of oboe and advisor for this thesis. Working and collaborating together on a regular basis helped keep me accountable and set goals for when I wanted to accomplish certain check points. For instance, I planned out when I would work on certain pieces, play them for studio class to receive feedback from peers, and when to rehearse with my accompanist. The long hours that were devoted to practicing brought out several challenges. My thumb, previously injured, struggled to regain its strength and endurance, and I often felt some degree of pain while I got it in shape. To combat this, I worked with a physical therapist who developed a splint to help

support my instrument and exercises to rebuild the muscles. This approach slowly helped me regain a better level of strength and encouraged me to push myself towards my goal. While not fully healed, I have learned to combat not only mental, but physical roadblocks in the process of preparing and creating.

Another step in my process was to research the composers and the pieces themselves. I did not know much about why each one was written, so this research helped me gather a deeper understanding and appreciation for each piece of music that I had come to know. The research process was probably one of the most impactful moments in my journey to present this project. I grew to know the composers and their lives and understand why these pieces had such an impact on me. I found characteristics in each of the composers' lives that I myself identified with and that established a more grounded sense of connection. This process surprised me in that I grew to enjoy learning as I went, instead of dreading doing the research. I spent several hours poring over research and finding connections between these composers and my own life.

When I researched Camille Saint-Saëns, I discovered that he had multiple areas of interest ranging from musical composition to languages to mathematics and even travel. I found myself relating to him in more ways than I thought possible, especially in that he pursued various avenues of interest, which is something I've been attempting to do for a long time. Even in just the past few years I have struggled to choose which degree path to choose; starting in architecture, switching to music performance and from Spanish linguistics a few times. His success in his diverse experiences inspired and encouraged me that even though I have several strong areas of interest, I am free to pursue them and embark in experiences that will be my own throughout my own life.

Émile Paladilhe was another enigma to decipher. There is not a lot of research on him and it's even harder to find recordings of some of his works. However, I began to find what I was looking for. He actually studied under Saint-Saëns in his musical education, which I find extremely exciting, that one great composer, musician and adventurer was able to share his experiences and knowledge with a student to help pass along what life is about. Paladilhe intrigued me even more when I read about how his character was described. He was a man of great nature and deeply emotional. This struck a chord with me and how I identify as an emotional individual. I eagerly read how he was referenced as a devoted friend and a freely adaptable spirit. But perhaps the phrase I found most riveting was that he was "Fragile in his emotions and faithful in his friendships." What a genuine statement, I thought. I admire Paladilhe for his personality and that helps me better understand and relate to him. The particular piece I will be playing by him was written after he lost his children, and this deeply moves me to tap into that sadness when I perform it, to communicate that grief and desperation to the audience.

Finally I began to learn about the life of Ralph Vaughan Williams. He used folk songs to inspire his compositions and used it as his musical style. He did a lot of work in churches, composing religious and spiritual works, and establishing himself as a notable composer. He lost his father when he was young and just knowing that has helped me to empathize with his pain, much of which I see in the piece I've selected by him. Even as his career as a composer was progressing, Vaughan Williams was not deterred when war broke out and he enlisted as an orderly in the medical corps. He became known for arranging choral singing in the trenches. I admire that amidst this would-be roadblock in his career, his creative development was not hindered and he continued to pursue what he loved, no matter his situation.

Having gathered ample information to help guide my journey through discovering these pieces on a deeper level, I was able to return to the practice room with a new vigor and excitement. I spent more time putting in hard work and focused on making myself work when I was in the practice room. I learned that I needed to be more efficient with the time I had and fight to make every minute effective. This mentality helped me not to lose heart or become discouraged during frustrating times when I had to work through more difficult tasks in the practice room and in the preparation process for my recital.

In preparing for my recital, one of the most important things has been developing my story. This is not something that I've been concocting or dreaming up as I go, but rather something that has been developing and revealing itself as I work and chip away at these pieces. The entire purpose of my recital is to share with others my experiences, how I came to be where I am today, and my progression through the years I've been a student at Ball State. To begin, I selected the piece by Saint-Saëns. In its essence, this piece represents me as I was entering college. I was a little naïve, expecting grand fantastic adventures, and innocent. The beginning of the piece reflects a transparent style, free flowing melodies, and a tasteful sound to the listener's ear. The overall mood is joyful and content, like a big sigh, reminiscing and yet looking ahead at the same time. The middle section is a more energetic time, full of frolicking lines and faster paced lines achieving energy without any turbulent feel. The end ties it all together with a restatement of the beginning theme and like an old friend, explores those melodies in a reminiscent way. This embodies the self that I was in the early stages of my college career. I was in a happy and exciting search for knowledge, belonging and meaning. I encountered things I did

not expect, like the spurts of fast notes in the middle section, but they flowed right into other passages. So at this point, the introduction to my experiences at Ball State was completed.

The next portion, embodied in Paladilhe's piece, reflects a more intense experience. It speaks to the more difficult times I found myself facing such as who my friends were, who I was, and what on earth was I doing. The piece starts with a turbulent piano introduction followed by an emotional statement of presence lingering at a high note and tapping into emotional expression. This is my way to explain that I am about to share something deep with the audience and that it should not be taken lightly. From there the notes become more fluid and smooth, while still maintaining that tension and eventually releasing. The freedom felt in this exposition expresses a range of emotions applicable to my life at that stage; remorse, regret, wistful sadness, nostalgia, and longing. To me the piece fully characterizes the losses suffered by Paladilhe in his life's experiences, and it equally gives me the opportunity to voice those sufferings as well as my own. After the exposition, a cadenza follows, or a free and open section. While I thought I had freedom and everything in life was going just fine, I began to realize that my priorities were not exactly in the places I wanted them to be. At this point, I was spending more time chasing after things that weren't going to help me be a productive human being and grow in deeper relationships with my friends. There are parts of this piece that gave me a great deal of trouble to learn. This piece is all about sitting down and hashing out the dirty stuff. I could do it. All I needed to do was commit to doing it, much like in my life, I had to sit down and figure out who the important people were in my life, and if I wanted to keep pursuing friendships that weren't being reciprocated. Working on this piece itself provided an outlet for me to express myself and learn about how I wanted to be living. The result is a newfound sense of determination, showing the skills I've acquired, a sense of who I am based on where I came from, and the sense of no

turning back. The end of this piece is a powerful statement for me and clearly expresses my overcoming difficult times in my life.

Finally in the recital program comes the Vaughan Williams piece. This piece conveys a more emotional journey in itself. In the beginning, there is a slow and nebulous entrance leading up to a cadenza, a more soloistic section. I have prepared it exclusively as a story that I have to tell about myself. It means a lot to me personally and I've loved getting to work on it through some of the most challenging times of my life. I had the chance to play this piece for a master class and while entering the section near the beginning that sails up into the higher register, was challenged to think about hurt, to really tap into that emotional expression and let it loose. I was posed with the question, "Haven't you ever been hurt before, and been frustrated? Make them feel it!" This comment alone gave me a certain fire that I could not quite explain. I had been hurt, and extremely frustrated. It became personal that day. That was the first time I felt this music speak exactly how I felt. The agonizing triplet patterns wailing into the air like my cry for help, for someone to care. In the midst of heartache, this piece became a manifestation of my emotions and was quintessential in my emotional growth. The entire piece evokes a reflective mood, including portions of high action and excitement, and always coming back to that pensive, folk-inspired theme. While this piece presents many challenges and technical obstacles, the process of working on it and learning to apply my personal story to each note and phrase helped make it an intimate story of what I've experienced and learned in the struggle to find myself and identify who I am.

I think the essence of why I have learned what I have learned can be said in a phrase I learned while I traveled to Haiti. There is a phrase to ask how someone is doing, "sak pase?" to which one can respond with "nap boukanenglas," which uses the words for fire and ice meaning

that while life may be crazy, things are good. In my own life, there have been struggles and hard times, but through all the pain, the experience of life itself is something beautiful that I am learning to appreciate and through it all, it is well.

Program Notes

Camille Saint-Saëns

Born October 9, 1835; Paris, France

Died December 16, 1921; Algeria

Oboe Sonata, Op. 166, 02. Second Movement



Saint-Saëns was a true renaissance man with a variety of incredible talent. He was a gifted composer and musician from a young age, studied languages, mathematics, geology, and astronomy. His other passions and pursuits led him to become an avid traveler, visiting places as exotic as Africa, South America, Asia, and the Middle East. He composed this Oboe Sonata in the final year of his life and dedicated it to oboist Louis-Jean-Baptiste Bas, who was renowned for his excellent scales. In the summer of 1921, it was published in Paris. The sonata captures the essence of the Romantic time period in which it was composed and adequately dialogues the various stages and faces of life ranging from joy to regret. *Ad Libitum* specifically exemplifies flowing freedom and warm melodic

lines through the virtuosic passages that begin and conclude the movement. These provide ample outlets of emotional expression and tasteful closure to the listener's ear. It's as if the culmination of the *Ad Libitum* is a contented sigh, joyful and reminiscent. The *Allegretto* section introduces a more playful, energetic style while retaining an innocent and carefree attitude. The repeated triplet figures provide a grounded sense of stately closure as the section draws to a contented close and finishes with the flowing cadenza into a satisfied resolution.

Émile Paladilhe

Born June 3, 1844 in Montpellier, France

Died January 8, 1926 in Paris, France

Solo Pour Hautbois



Émile Paladilhe was the son of a physician who played the flute. His interest in music spurred the family to move to Paris where Paladilhe could further study at the Paris Conservatory. Under the instruction of several notable teachers, including Camille Saint-Saëns, Paladilhe cultivated his musical education assisted by his impeccable technique and impressive memory. Solo Pour Hautbois is the Paladilhe's most notable woodwind solo that is still performed today. Paladilhe is described as a man of great nature, deeply emotional, and of good character. He was fragile in his emotions, but faithful in his friendships with his artist's heart. In his life, Paladilhe experienced the loss of his

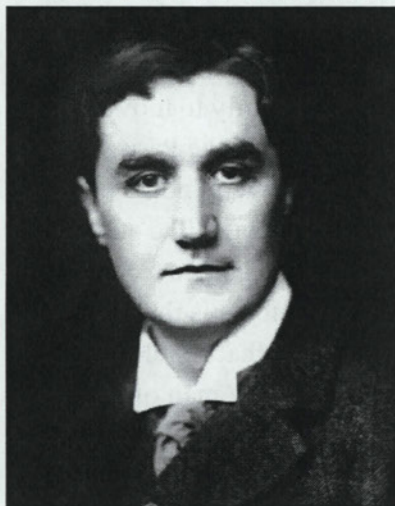
son, Jean Paladilhe. Present in Solo Pour Hautbois are some poignant moments which inspire one to imagine great sadness or loss. In the introductory cadenza, big intervals and leaps between notes suggest subtle sequences of emotional dialogues that guide the listener along a personal story. The piece is replete with melancholy moments of remorse, sudden bursts of tragedy, and wistful sadness. Despite the intrepid turbulence that overcomes the majority of the piece, a more relaxed and bouncy theme climbs into existence, exchanging sadness with strength and hope. In the resolution of the piece, a realization of truth comes to light and the excitement in the ascending repeated notes leads the listener to the flaunty triplets declaring triumph followed by a decisive finale.

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Born October 12, 1872 in Down Ampney, Gloucestershire. England

Died August 26, 1958 in London, England

Oboe Concerto, 1. Rondo Pastorale



Ralph Vaughan Williams was a collector of folksongs and regarded their modal tonalities in high esteem, as reflected in the first movement of his Oboe Concerto, Rondo Pastorale. He began his studies at Cambridge and the London Royal College of Music. His musical style emulates that of the late Romantic, early 20th Century genre and many of his works stemmed from religious and spiritual songs. In the midst of his rising musical career, war broke out and Vaughan Williams enlisted at 41 as an orderly in the medical corps. He became famous for arranging choral singing and entertainment among the troops in the trenches. And while the war interrupted his work, it did not inhibit his creative development. In Rondo Pastorale, Vaughan William's emotional style is displayed through the key of a

minor with poignant recurring melodies in a cadenza like statement. A folk tune inspired melody meanders urgently through the key of G major and returns to a brief minor key expressing a more wounded cry through high triplets. Closely following comes an energetic and quick conglomeration of notes ranging from a very low and powerful note on the oboe C to a daunting high E. The familiar melody returns, inviting the listener to tap into their own reflective emotions and the piece finishes with soaring restatement of one of the main themes and melts into supple triplet patterns. These triplets give way to a procession of several longer notes escalating into a final E where the sound glides away into silence.

Works Cited

- "Basic Repertoire List - Vaughan Williams." *Classical Net*,
www.classical.net/music/comp.lst/vaughanwilliams.php.
- Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopædia. "Ralph Vaughan Williams." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 9 Feb. 2018,
www.britannica.com/biography/Ralph-Vaughan-Williams.
- Cummings, Robert. "Camille Saint-Saëns." *AllMusic*, www.allmusic.com/artist/camille-saint-sa%C3%ABns-mn0000688311/biography
- "Emile Paladilhe." *Emile Paladilhe* | *ArkivMusic*, www.arkivmusic.com/classical/Name/Emile-Paladilhe/Composer/9073-1#drilldown_overview.
- Folkman, B. (1990). [Liner notes]. In *Lucarelli* [CD]. Westbury, NY: Koch International
- Harrison, M. (1994). [Liner notes]. In *Vaughan Williams: Complete Concertos etc.* [CD]. England: Chandos Records Ltd.
- Ishii, H. (1989). [Liner notes]. In *Oboe Sonatas* [CD]. Japan: Columbia Co., Ltd.
- London, T. (2006). [Liner notes]. In *Masters of the Oboe* [CD]. New York, NY: Universal Music Classics Group, UMG Recordings Inc.
- Montagne, Denis Havard de la. "Émile PALADILHE." *Émile Paladilhe*, Musica Et Memoria, www.musimem.com/paladilhe.htm.
- "Paladilhe, Emile." *Grande Musica • A Digital Library for Music Lovers • Musical Biographies - P, 1 • Paladilhe, Emile*, grandemusica.net/musical-biographies-p-1/paladilhe-emile.
- "Saint-Saëns, Camille." *San Francisco Classical Voice*, www.sfcv.org/learn/composer-gallery/saint-sa%C3%ABns-camille.
- "Saint-Saëns." *Classical Net*, www.classical.net/music/comp.lst/saint-saens.php.

Staff, Rovi. "Ralph Vaughan Williams ." *AllMusic*, www.allmusic.com/artist/ralph-vaughan-williams-mn0000204681/biography.

Vogel, A. (2000). [Liner notes]. In *Oboe Obsession* [CD]. Hollywood, CA: Delos International Inc.

Digital Supplements (Recording of Recital)

<https://ballstate.app.box.com/s/h0ll9ql38e0xe4c9dsk69xa2shggrvbc>